



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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October 23, 2012

TO: Chief School Administrators
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FROM: Peter Shulman, Assistant Commissioner/Chief Talent Officer *PS*
Division of Teacher and Leader Effectiveness

SUBJECT: Review of Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements

This memo reviews some provisions of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law and provides further clarifications on the Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) requirements as follows: (1) maintaining HQT identification forms, (2) HQT requirements for teachers holding the K-5 versus N-8/K-8 instructional certificates who teach grades 6-8, (3) HQT requirements for special education assignments, (4) HQT requirements for teachers of basic skills, and (5) considerations for job applicants.

Maintaining HQT Identification Forms

Teachers who have achieved highly qualified status, whether through federal requirements or through the HOUSE matrix prior to its expiration, retain highly qualified status **permanently** for the teaching assignment designated on the approved forms. Original HQT identification forms, with appropriate documentation, must be maintained in school districts for all teachers assigned to teach in areas requiring highly qualified status. Copies of the appropriate HQT forms should be provided to the respective teachers. HQT forms must be available on file until such time as a teacher leaves the district to take employment elsewhere. Upon request, districts must send a teacher's official HQT forms to the new employer, whether the employer is located in New Jersey or another state.

HQT Requirements for General Education Teachers in Grades 6-8

In order to teach a content area in departmentalized middle grades (6-8), teachers who hold the K-8 or N-8 instructional certificate must have attained highly qualified status for that content area by meeting one of the four federal requirements: passing the appropriate Praxis II content-knowledge exam; having 30 credits (12 of the 30 credits at upper division level) or an undergraduate major in the content area; having a graduate degree in the content area; or having an advanced credential, such as National Board Certification, in the content area.

If assigned to teach a content area in middle grades (6-8), teachers who hold the K-5 instructional certificate must also hold the appropriate Middle School Subject Matter Specialization Endorsement for each content area in order to meet HQT requirements.

HQT Requirements for Special Education Assignments

Please note: The following information does not provide a comprehensive overview of all HQT requirements concerning special education programs. Please refer to the chart of [HQT requirements](#) and the [presentation](#) located on the department's Website for additional details regarding special education teachers and HQT requirements.

Teachers holding the Teacher of Students with Disabilities endorsement (TOSD): Teachers holding the TOSD together with the K-5 instructional certificate are certified and highly qualified to have the primary instructional responsibility for special education students in **grades K-5 only**.

Teachers holding the TOSD endorsement together with the K-8/N-8 instructional certificate who have the primary instructional responsibility in **self-contained** settings in grades K-8 must be highly qualified as elementary generalists.

Teachers holding the Teacher of the Handicapped certificate (TOH): Teachers holding the TOH who have the primary instructional responsibility in grades 6-8 (including pull-out replacement resource programs) must meet highly qualified requirements consistent with requirements for the general education teachers. Therefore, if a grade level(s) is **self-contained**, teachers holding the TOH must be highly qualified as elementary generalists. If a grade level is **departmentalized**, teachers holding the TOH must be highly qualified for grades 6-8 in each core academic subject they teach.

Aligning highly qualified requirements with grade level: Special education teachers having the primary instructional responsibility for students who will be assessed on the NJASK or HSPA **must meet highly qualified requirements consistent with the grade level of the students they teach**. That is, a teacher's highly qualified requirement is not aligned with the cognitive functionality of students. An **exception** to this policy is when all students in a class are assessed with the Alternative Proficiency Assessment (APA), which requires that the special education teacher be highly qualified as an elementary generalist.

General education teachers teaching special education students: Pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.7(f)* and *(g)*, instruction may be provided in grades 6-12 by a highly qualified general education teacher in a class organized around a single content area consisting solely of students with disabilities where an adapted general education curriculum is used. Such a class must not exceed a maximum instructional size of 12; however, class size may be increased up to 16 students with the addition of a classroom aide.

HQT Requirements for Teachers of Basic Skills

Highly qualified requirements for teachers of basic skills are the same as the requirements for all other teachers of core academic subjects. Therefore, teachers holding the K-5 or K-8/N-8 instructional certificate who teach basic skills must be highly qualified in the content area(s) they teach, i.e., those teachers teaching basic skills in grades 6-8 must meet the requirements for the middle

school level, and those teaching basic skills in grades 9-12 must meet the requirements for the high school level.

Considerations for Job Applicants

Many job applications require teaching candidates to respond to specific questions regarding their highly qualified status. New or veteran teachers who do not yet have official highly qualified forms filed with a school district may not be able to present the information requested in the application. To prevent possible misinterpretation of applicants' highly qualified status, districts are encouraged to ask for clarifying information. For more details on this matter, please go to www.nj.gov/education/profdev/nclb.

Please note that existing teachers who have already met HQT requirements, as defined by federal law or via the HOUSE matrix, cannot be held to a higher standard of qualification than is set forth in the law. However, school districts may seek to exceed HQT requirements when hiring new staff.

Additional Information

To ensure that educators receive updated, timely information and are maintaining accurate records, teachers and administrators are encouraged to review the HQT website located at www.nj.gov/education/profdev/nclb.

If you have any questions regarding the Highly Qualified Teacher requirements, please contact the highly qualified teacher coordinator, at (609) 777-4482 or by emailing HQTeachers@doe.state.nj.us.

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